

ZIONISM

**• *ITS ASPIRATIONS, AIMS
AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS***

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IN olden times, Zion was the designation for the Government quarters in Jerusalem.

At the end of Jewish antiquity, the term Zion symbolized the entire fabric of Jewish life in Palestine.

In the Middle Ages, the term Zion was used by the great Hebrew poets to denote Eretz Israel. It had both a religious and political meaning. The Zionist movement throughout the centuries of Jewish Diaspora life—the continued longing for Zion, that is to say, for the rebuilding of our ancestral home in Palestine—found powerful expression in Jewish prayers, homilies and ceremonials.

In modern times, the term Zionism came to have a purely secular connotation. It was first used by Hebrew writers in the latter part of the nineteenth century in connection with the Hibath Zion movement, whose objective was to establish Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine without any political aims. Only with the appearance of Theodor Herzl in 1896 has Zionism assumed the character of a political movement.

Background of the Zionist Movement

Throughout the centuries of Jewish Diaspora life, the non-Jewish world considered the Jews as an ethnic group and also referred to them as a nation. In England, the term Jewish nation was used as late as 1865.

With the rise of the Reform movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century and its corollary, the assimilationist tendency, aiming at the dissolution of the Jewish people as an ethnic group, the liberals in the West, taking a cue from the Jewish Reform leaders, also began to characterize the Jews as a religious group.

The rise of the Jewish emancipation movement in Western Europe as well as the results of the ascendancy of liberalism, coincide with the rise of the nationalist movement in Western Europe, but the development of the latter has nullified efforts of the former. No sooner was the emancipation of the Jews in the West completed, when the Nationalist movement with its anti-Semitic admixture began to gain momentum. The growing Jew-hatred in every part of the West, culminating in the Dreyfus trial shortly before the end of the century, spelled the end of Jewish universalism as it expressed itself in the tendency of assimilation.

The alternative to assimilation—national dissolution and the destruction of the Jew as a group—is Zionism. It aspires to revitalize all Jewish energies and give birth to new ones. Its objective is to re-energize Jewish consciousness and to re-establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Zionism is co-equal to Jewish nationalism, but the latter is not identical with the biological nationalism now in vogue. Since the Jewish community is not held together by physical force but is based on a spiritual consensus, Jewish nationalism is of a purely spiritual character. It is free from race hatred and race prejudice. It does not spell bellicosity or aggression. It only implies a

deepening of Jewish consciousness, a widening of the Jewish horizon, and an effort to regain our heritage in Palestine—that is to say, the establishment of a publicly recognized national Jewish home in the country of our ancestors.

Achievements of the Zionist Movement

Impartial observers of Zionism admit that it has succeeded in its two major objectives: the revitalizing of Jewish energies in the lands of the Diaspora and the laying of a strong foundation for a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.

The greatest achievement of Zionism is that it has brought forth a new type of Jew in the Diaspora—a Jew who is morally courageous, politically enterprising and culturally active; and a new type of Jew in Palestine—the pioneer with an indomitable will to work and a spirit of sacrifice. If the Zionistically-minded Jew in the lands of the Diaspora is sagacious and full of initiative, the new type of Jew in Palestine, the Halutz, is distinguished by his fearlessness and singleness of purpose. To appreciate fully the moral achievements of Zionism, we need only to contrast the Jew at the beginning of the nineteenth and the twentieth century. The former was fearful, meek, overawed by the new world around him and begging to be emancipated. The latter is courageous, determined, conscious of his right to live as a Jew, conscious of his great contribution to world history, and demanding his right to live as a Jew.

The Zionist movement has to its credit not only the spiritual transformation of a people but the physical transformation of a country. It has to its credit the transformation of a fringe of the Arab desert into a land flowing with milk and honey. It has to its credit the establishment of a great Jewish community in Palestine, based on the principles of economic and social justice. Zionism has given Jewish labor an oppor-

tunity to display its genius and to show the unbiased and unprejudiced what it is capable of doing in all fields of practical human endeavor.

Zionism has to its credit the re-creating of the Jewish national address lost to the Jewish people with the destruction of ancient Judaea by ancient Rome.

Zionism has to its credit the establishment of a great cultural center in Palestine, the Hebrew University, a number of great academic institutions, a modern Hebraic educational system, a modern Hebrew theatre, and the development of the Jewish plastic arts. The Hebrew University and the other academic institutions, though only fifteen years old, have already made definite contributions to science and enormous contributions to Jewish learning.

It is to the credit of the Zionist movement that it has revived Hebrew, for almost two thousand years a purely literary language, into a living idiom now spoken by hundreds of thousands of Jews in and outside of Palestine.

Why Palestine?

In view of our almost miraculous accomplishments in Palestine, the question *why Palestine* does not arise any longer. The beginning of Zionist colonization in Palestine coincides with the beginning of the Jewish colonization in the Argentine. The Jewish colonies in the Argentine are now in a process of dissolution. They have made no contribution to Jewish cultural life and have created no permanent Jewish values. The old generation of colonists is dying out and the new one is deserting the colonies and settling in the Argentine cities where it will be swallowed by the Spanish environment. But the Jewish colonies in Palestine are centers of

Jewish life and activity and the foundation of a new Jewish civilization in Palestine. The failure of Jewish colonization in Argentine and other countries and its success in Palestine is basically due to the land—Palestine—the country of our hope and future because it is a country of the great Jewish past.

Palestine is not only our heritage historically and spiritually but also belongs to us because we are rebuilding it. The land belongs to those who build it. That is the reason why America belongs to the white and not to the red, and why South Africa and Australia belong to the white and not to the black.

For centuries Arabs have lived in Palestine and made it more and more a land of swamps, plus malaria, plus trachoma. While Palestine was completely controlled by Arabs it was uninhabitable for civilized people. The Arabs succeeded in transforming a land flowing with milk and honey into a disease-breeding waste land. It took only twenty years of Jewish effort and energy to redeem a considerable part of Palestine from Arab devastation. If Palestine has today all the implements of modern civilization and culture and is today part of the dynamic West instead of the lethargic East, it is solely and exclusively due to Zionist efforts. The magic force of Palestine plus Zionist idealism and energy have transformed a Jewish generation of dreamers, theoreticians, and *luft-menschen* into a generation of sturdy farmers, vigorous planters and hard workers. This transformation has created not only a new Jew mentally but also a new Jew physically. If the Western nations are now willing to concede statehood to Jewish Palestine, it is largely the result of their conviction that the example of self-restraint and political discipline exhibited by the Palestine Jews in recent years makes them ripe for political independence.

The Arab Problem

The recent disturbances in Palestine have caused a great deal of confusion in Jewish and non-Jewish circles. Ill-wishers of Zionism consider this unrest to be proof of the difficulties involved in large-scale Jewish colonization in Palestine. They argue that the more the Jewish population in Palestine grows, the fiercer will be the resistance of the Arabs. Not so much to allay these fears but to describe the realities as they are, the following facts must be considered:

1. Palestine is not the national and ancestral homeland of the Arabs; 95% of the Arabs live outside of Palestine on territory comprising over a million square miles.

2. Before the World War, the Palestine Arabs never claimed nationhood or statehood for Palestine.

3. Only two generations ago, the entire Arab population of Palestine was less than 300,000, but the number of Arabs living in the various Arab countries was over 20,000,000.

4. The Palestine Arabs, representing only a small part of the Arab peoples, are divided into a large number of groups, completely lacking in national unity or in a community of either religious, national or economic interests. There are Mohammedan and Christian Arabs. There are Bedouins living the way their ancestors lived thousands of years ago, and fellaheen, poor farmer tenants, agricultural workers, with very little in common with the Bedouins. There is a small group of rich Arab feudal lords, most of whom have a permanent residence in Paris or Cairo. They represent the class of the Levantine absentee landowners who have very little in common either with the fellaheen or Bedouins. In addition, Palestine Arabs are divided into many hostile tribes. According to the best anthropological opinion, the Palestine Arabs

do not represent a united ethnic but a linguistic group. Their claim to separate nationality has no foundation either of anthropological or political reality. As it is, there are already too many Arab states. None of them is sufficiently strong to be independent. They are all dependent on one or the other foreign power for their very existence. Iraq is dependent on England; Syria on France; the Yemen on Italy, etc. The most solid of the half a dozen Arab states is Saudi-Arabia which is not a state in the modern meaning of the term but some sort of a satrapy. It has no contact with the outside world, has none of the implements of modern civilization and as far as humanity at large is concerned, it makes but little difference whether Saudi-Arabia or the Yemen do or do not exist as separate political entities. The more recent Arab states, Iraq, Transjordan and Syria (to be completely independent within two years) are divided into so many hostile groups that their future is very dubious.

5. All that virtually remains of the pro-Arab argument of the ill-wishers of Zionism centers around the Palestine Arab population. The majority of this population is conservative and peace-loving. The Arab restlessness in Palestine, which is traceable to family feuds between a few of the ruling families, was intensified by foreign propaganda, primarily conducted by Fascist, Nazi and Communist agents, as revealed during the hearings of the Royal Commission investigating the causes of the disturbances. But inasmuch as this propaganda is directed not only against Jews but also against the British Empire and has as its primary objective the weakening of the British position in Palestine, it is Great Britain's worry as much as ours, if not more. It took Great Britain some time to realize the effectiveness of the anti-British character of the foreign propaganda in Palestine. But now that it has a clear estimate of the injury this propaganda has done to British prestige, it is doing all that it can to counteract and suppress it.

6. The Arab-Jewish problem will be solved either by the establishment of an independent Jewish commonwealth in which the Jews will be able to develop a preponderant Jewish majority in a very short time, or by better and efficient enforcement of the Mandate. For the time being, the English Government is resolved to carry out a plan of partition along the lines proposed by the Royal Commission, according to which there will be created a Jewish State, an Arab State and a British mandated area. In the negotiations with the British Government, the Jewish Agency will insist that the territory to be assigned to the Jewish State shall be sufficient to absorb and sustain at least two million Jews. Such a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine will not only represent the strongest and most solid of all states in the Middle East, but is bound to become a great economic and cultural center, capable of establishing new relations with the surrounding Arab states, and of creating within their territories new centers for Jewish immigration. It does not require much foresight to visualize an independent Jewish Palestine as a cultural, economic and financial center for all Arab states. Even a mandated Palestine with a Jewish population of a million is bound to create a new Jewish Arab relationship.

Jewish Palestine and Diaspora Jewry

In the hey-days of democratic idealism soon after the war, the belief was prevalent that Diaspora Jewry will redeem Palestine. Today, Jewish conditions have changed for the worse. The growing Jewish Palestine is the only hope for Diaspora Jewry. Should the plan for a sovereign Jewish commonwealth come into being, the political and moral status of the Jews all over the world will undergo a change for the better. An independent Jewish community in Palestine will be a powerful weapon in the hands of the Jewish leadership to combat the spirit of the Middle Ages now descending upon

various groups of European Jewry. A Jewish commonwealth in Palestine will have its own diplomatic representatives, will conclude treaties, will have a seat in the League of Nations, and will be in a position to exert strong diplomatic, political and economic pressure upon many states now openly hostile to the Jew. Diplomatic representatives of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine will have easy access to diplomatic chanceries in Europe and will be able to discuss Jewish problems with representatives of foreign powers with that sense of dignity and realism common to envoys of independent states. If little Montenegro with a population of only a quarter of a million, consisting of shepherds and poor peasants, could secure justice in its grievance against such a power as Turkey, a highly civilized Jewish Palestine with a population six or eight times that of Montenegro will surely succeed in bringing pressure to bear upon anti-Semitic governments to modify their attitude to their Jewish citizens. We need not be endowed with the spirit of a prophet to predict that the stronger Jewish Palestine will grow, the better will be the position of the various Jewish groups in their lands of oppression.

Zionism realized, implies not only an independent Jewish State in Palestine but a liberated Jewish people in the countries of the Diaspora.

The Zionist Organization

The Zionist Organization is the only Jewish body in the world truly deserving of the attribute *national*. It is today as much a part of Jewish life as the synagogue. In far away Australia, China, Japan, Siam, the Latin-American states, United States, Canada, and every European country, with the exception of Russia where Zionism and Hebrew are forbidden by law, there exists a Zionist organization in one form or another. Every Zionist unit in every land, in every commu-

nity, discharges definite Zionist duties, beginning with the first essential—membership dues—and ending in the more complicated duties of an organizational, financial, communal and cultural nature.

The World Zionist Organization is divided, first, into *landsmanschaften* or territorial units; and then into three major groups: the General Zionists, representing the liberal middle-classes; the Poale Zion-Zeire Zion, representing the Socialist labor elements; and the Mizrachi, representing the Orthodox wing of the World Zionist Organization. Each territorial unit consists of sub-divisions such as Districts or Societies and is autonomous in its internal affairs. But matters of international policy and budget are decided by the World Zionist Organization whose supreme authority is the World Zionist Congress, established by the late Theodor Herzl in 1897, which meets every other year at a place and country designated by the permanent governing body called the Actions Committee (General Council), which is elected by the Congress for a period of two years. The Congress is composed of delegates democratically elected by adult dues-paying members (Shekel payers) and is the sovereign power in all Zionist matters determining the political, financial, cultural and colonization policies of the Organization. The constitution of the Zionist Organization affords autonomy to individual units interfering as little as possible with internal affairs of the various territorial and party groups.

The World Zionist Organization with headquarters both in Jerusalem and in London had already in the early years of its existence established financial institutions to enable it to continue its operations on a large scale. It established the Jewish Colonial Bank in 1899 and the Jewish National Fund in 1900. The purpose of the former is to finance Jewish commerce and industry in Palestine, while the objective of the

latter is the collection of funds for the acquisition of land in Palestine. The land purchased by the National Fund is the inalienable property of the Jewish people and is leased to farmers at a nominal fee. In the course of the thirty-seven years of its activities, the Jewish National Fund has collected over \$22,000,000, has acquired close to 400,000 dunams of land, and has settled 45,000 Jewish farmers on the land. The Jewish Colonial Trust, whose original capital was £15,000, is now an important financial instrument of the World Zionist organization and through its Palestine subsidiary, the Anglo Palestine Bank, a powerful instrumentality in the agricultural, commercial and industrial development of Palestine.

In the year 1920, the Zionist Organization, faced with the problem of large-scale operations in Palestine, established the Palestine Foundation Fund, better known as the Keren Hayesod, which finances the budget of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. The Keren Hayesod has collected by means of annual contributions from Jews all over the world a sum of over \$30,000,000, all of which was used for the economic development of the Jewish Homeland. These \$50,000,000, which were invested in Palestine in the course of the last twenty-five years, have encouraged private Jewish capital to make major investments in the Jewish Homeland, and according to available statistics, the total Jewish investments, including national capital, in Palestine since the termination of the World War amounts to \$400,000,000.

The Zionist Organization has thus laid such economic foundations in Palestine as to enable the country to absorb from 60,000 to 75,000 Jewish immigrants a year. The potential power of the present Jewish settlement in Palestine is sufficient to make the country the greatest Jewish immigration center in the world.

Numerical Strength

The present numerical strength of the Zionist Organization, as demonstrated by the number of delegates to the last Zionist Congress, is over 1,250,000, of whom about one-fifth is to be found in the United States. But the numerical strength of the Organization is not identical with the relative strength of the Zionist movement. While the Shekel-paying membership of the Zionist Organization is 1,250,000, the number of contributors to the various Zionist funds in all lands is over 2,000,000. The majority of the Jewish people in all lands is linked up with the Zionist movement. The majority would be still larger if the three million Jews in Russia were legally permitted to participate in Zionist activities. As a result of the financial restrictions in many European countries, many Zionist funds are deprived of support of a number of important Jewish groups.

After forty years of Zionist effort and sacrifice, there may soon come into existence a new Zion in our ancestral land, guided by Zionist leaders and manned by an experienced and loyal Zionist Civil Service.

If you enroll now as a Zionist member, you will be privileged to experience the greatest of all historical events in Jewish life, the final redemption of Zion after 2,000 years of tragic Jewish life and dispersion.

